

# ALLEN TUCKER MEMORIAL EXHIBITION



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*DECEMBER 6, 1939 TO JANUARY 3, 1940*



WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART  
TEN WEST EIGHTH STREET · NEW YORK



MIDI, 1914

*Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Forbes Watson*

## FOREWORD

ALLEN TUCKER's first comprehensive one-man exhibition was held by the Whitney Studio Club on these premises in 1918. It seems, therefore, appropriate that this exhibition which sums up and commemorates his life as an artist should be given in this place. It seems fitting, also, at this time to acknowledge a debt of gratitude to a man of distinguished mind and character, whose faultless taste in art and inexhaustible sympathy with the problems of his fellow artists, led to an association of many years, wherein his wisdom and understanding were of the greatest value in the development of those ideas which resulted in the formation of this Museum.

JULIANA FORCE, *Director*



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# ALLEN TUCKER

BY FORBES WATSON

ALLEN TUCKER was my best friend. During his life I took pleasure in the fact that before meeting him I wrote in praise of his art. That seems to me now a false idea as if friendship destroyed impartiality and not being a friend insured it. People are often vainglorious about their capacity to render unbiased judgments and, confusing impartiality with justice, confront the artist's work as if interpretation of it were a legal rather than a personal problem. Whether one knows a painter or does not, the instant his work stirs us, we are carried into a realm of apprehending quite removed from a jury's determination of the facts or the judge's interpretation of the law.

Allen Tucker's work moves me. It moves me positively and fills me with a sense of the unattainable. He himself said more than once that "in design one must be positive." And in that little masterpiece *Design and the Idea*, he wrote: "It is the pursuit of happiness that makes life worth living and it is the pursuit toward an unattainable perfection that makes painting worth doing."

From the first days when as a pupil of John H. Twachtman he began to seek, within the sphere of impressionism, for the means whereby to express his visual conceptions, he felt his own need for the positive statement. Everything about him was positive, his joys, his angers, his loves, his hatreds, his laughter and his denunciations. He would have been an unreasonable person had his instinct for truth, sincerity and beauty not been so sure and active. His fury was against wrong, compromise, cheating—in art and in life. When these appeared he was uncomfortably tactless, for he hated compromise as a deadly sin and spoke out sharply and quickly. His joy was in the incomparable wealth which the world showers upon those who have eyes to see. Like all true painters he found inspiration in numberless visual aspects and forgot himself in them.

Year by year, it seemed to me, his search for the unattainable drew him further from the literal and the concrete. During the last years of his life he was evidently truly seeking for the unattainable. Profoundly religious he finally reached out in his painting toward the beyond. In *The Crucifixion* three small crosses glow on the top of a distant hill, a streak of lightning zigzags across the sky, the trees twist in the gale and startled figures throw

up their arms in terror. The Light is there. This is a late picture toward which each observer will react in his own way. But react he will. For me it is both an exalted and a desperate picture, exalted in its high intensity of religious emotion, desperate in its effort to reach the other side.

I see in the picture or perhaps read into it the summation of an artist who began with light and ended with light, light of the spring, of a rainy day, of the undiluted sun, light of the street lamps seen through the dark, light of the stage, light of the night and finally the light of faith.

I like artists who do not change with the crowd, who are not lyricists at one moment and sociologically rampant the next. Allen Tucker came by impressionism naturally and moved by an inevitable, unforced growth into expressionism. As a young man, half a century ago, when he admired and studied with Twachtman, impressionism in America was at the heart of the radical movement. It was followed by other radical movements piling up on each other with such speed that every painter became a radical movement in himself and the surest way to hurt any artist's feelings was to dub him a conservative. Allen Tucker watched these movements with keen interest knowing well that there are many ways to paint and believing that the final test lay in the sincerity of the artist's aims. One way of painting might come into favor and another way go out. In the end sincerity would outlive the passing changes.

He wrote: "I am inclined to think that sincerity is the bedrock of the whole effort. To be one's self, to be honest with one's self, to do as one thinks, to follow one's own vision and to develop that talent, that vision continually all one's life, is the way to learn to paint."

That is certainly the road that Allen Tucker followed, from the delicate, lyrical, unpatterned and uncontrasted early works to the striking generalizations ever more positive in their design, to the final period of social, historical and religious statements. In these later works he apparently wanted to subordinate the figures to the earth or at least to present them on the scale in which we appear—specks on the landscape. At the same time he suggested the significance of the event using these "specks" with telling effect. In *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, the father of his country appears unheroically casual, surrounded by other soldiers in a group which plays no more important a part in the landscape than if it had no historical eminence. At the same time it is the event and a very original version of it.

Brilliantly communicative, passionately in love with art in all its forms, with an ear for music and poetry, an eye for painting, sculpture and architecture, brimming over with wit and fancy, genial and provocative in talk, Allen Tucker had one essential quality that colored his deep cultivation

and "fierce" convictions. I quote the word "fierce" because it was a favorite word of his which he often used as a synonym for intense. Outstanding among his many qualities—freshness of mind, intensity of reaction to art, untarnished honesty, and an originality for which he never strained, was his unwavering and never discussed asceticism. Asceticism was his silent partner, something, like his religion, which he kept to himself. He had an incomparable purity that gave to his quick laughter and gaiety the bewitching quality of a child's hilarity. Children understood him instantly.

The effect of his asceticism seems to me to be written clearly in his painting. It accounts for the fact that an art which began in impressionism, often referred to as the impasse of the logic of realism, finally developed into a phase of expressionist painting based upon abstractions. He talked much and wrote about design, balance, unity, the abstract qualities of art and although so warm and personal in his expression he was never literal. The trees that he admired when we dubbed around the Bedford golf course together did not appear to him as they do to those lovers of trees who delight in drawing and painting what we might call portraits of trees. He often used a much generalized summary of the tree symbolizing its growth in an upward shooting flamelike form because he was so much absorbed in the design of the whole canvas.

Even in his portraits, the "sitter" is rarely as absorbing to him as the design. While many painters have insisted that it is in his portraits that his originality is most marked, it is certainly true that in them his asceticism is most apparent. I think we find it also in his color, in his love of design for its own sake. It becomes dominant in such social comments as *The Strike* and *The Dead Factory*.

I have written much about Allen Tucker and on this occasion I have made no effort to refresh my memory of these past writings. In this short note I have only attempted to put down for what they may have of interest a few personal reactions. If a painter as rare in spirit as Allen Tucker has found a way to paint which conveys that spirit to others he has succeeded as a painter. That does not mean that his is the one right way. There is a way for every man—the way which most nearly communicates his special qualities. Allen Tucker found his way. But no note on him should be limited to his painting and I can think of no better conclusion since it states a principle of his so well, than the last paragraph of his own *Design and the Idea*.

"The things that one has seen all one's life are the things that are down deepest in one. Mark Twain said 'Unconscious observation is the only important observation.' A great many very great artists have painted out

of their own country. One could make a list of them, but nevertheless I think that our job is to stay here and paint; to go abroad and learn—to come back here and create. Go abroad not necessarily to draw from a model, but go abroad to see the glories of the world that through the centuries man has made, but come back here and help to continue to create American ideas and ideals. To help here at this critical time not only with one's product but with one's personality, for the future of this country depends on the ideas that are now created, and ideas are created first by art. For the creative imagination must rule the mind. The mind must not limit the creative imagination. The affair of the painter is to exercise and develop his creative imagination. The country depends on him. He must develop and express his ideas, his visual ideas in terms of design. He must see—see visions, for where there is no vision the people perish."

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

ALLEN TUCKER, son of Richard Sands Tucker and Margaret Allen (Auchnuty) Tucker, was born in 1866 in Brooklyn, New York. His ancestors were native to this country from colonial times. He received the degree of Ph. B. at the School of Mines, Columbia University, Class of 1888. He studied drawing and painting at the Art Students League under John H. Twachtman. His association with the League continued for many years, and in 1894 he was its vice-president. From 1920 to 1926 he was instructor of drawing and painting; in 1927 and 1928 lecturer on composition. For a period beginning in 1895 he practiced architecture in the firm of McIlvaine and Tucker. In 1904 he gave up architecture and devoted all his time to painting. He lived in New York City working for the most part in the country. He painted for several summers in New Mexico and at Lake Louise in Canada, but his greatest delight was in painting the country-side, the sea and coast of the East, in the Highlands of New Jersey, in Maine and Massachusetts.

He went to Europe for the first time when he was nine years old and lived there for two years, an experience which made a lasting impression. Subsequently he made several trips to Europe. From the age of eighteen for about ten years, he spent his summers abroad. During several winters, he painted in Italy, in Spain and Provence.

He served in France in the American Ambulance Service before America went into the war and also later in an American Red Cross hospital in France. "There and Here," a volume of poems, and other of his writings reflect his war experience. He is the author, also, of several articles and books on art, notably "John H. Twachtman," a critical essay published by the Macmillan Company for the Whitney Museum of American Art and "Design and the Idea" published first by The Arts and subsequently republished by the American Federation of Arts.

Allen Tucker died in New York City on January 26, 1939.

His paintings have been exhibited in the important cities of this country, and in Paris, London, Berlin and Venice.

He is represented in many private collections and in the following museums: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, N. Y.; Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn, N. Y.; Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, R. I.; Albright Art Gallery, Buffalo, N. Y.; Philadelphia Museum, Philadelphia, Pa.; Phillips Memorial Gallery, Washington, D. C.; Yale University Collection, New Haven, Conn.; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, N. Y.

## LENDERS TO THE EXHIBITION

The Whitney Museum of American Art wishes to make grateful acknowledgment to the following collectors and museums who have generously contributed works as loans to this exhibition:

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MISS GERTRUDE C. WELSH . . . . .	LOCUST, N. J.

# CATALOGUE

Unless otherwise designated, the works in this exhibition are lent by Mrs. Allen Tucker.

## GALLERY VIII

### PAINTINGS

1. THE REVIEW	1931.	36" x 30"
2. THE CRUCIFIXION	1936.	30" x 36"
3. NOVEMBER SECOND	1921. <i>Lent by Mr. and Mrs. James A. Edgar</i>	30" x 34"
4. SUNDOWN, GOTTS ISLAND	1930.	30" x 50"
5. VENICE	1905. <i>Lent by Mrs. John H. Bennett</i>	24" x 28"
6. MISS RAPHAELLA OTTIANO	1919.	72" x 25"
7. IN THE VEGA, RONDA	1910. <i>Lent by Miss Gertrude C. Welsh</i>	25" x 30"
8. THE SQUALL	1930. <i>Lent by Phillips Memorial Gallery</i>	30" x 50"
9. RHYTHM OF AUTUMN	1928. <i>Lent by Mr. Frank K. M. Rehn</i>	30" x 36"
10. THE DEAD FACTORY	1931.	30" x 36"
11. THE BLACK HAT	1936.	24" x 20"
12. THE FLYING DUTCHMAN	1931.	40" x 50"
13. THE SOVIETTE	1925.	20" x 24"
14. HEADLANDS	1930. <i>Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art</i>	30" x 36"
15. THE STRIKE	1929.	34" x 30"
16. SIGNALS	1931.	30" x 36"
17. THE ORANGE DRESS	1929. <i>Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art</i>	72" x 25"

18.	AGROUND	1932.	30" x 36"
19.	THE LEADING LADY	1922.	30" x 25"
20.	A BRANCH	1930.	30" x 36"
21.	OUTDOORS (Self Portrait)	1924.	30" x 25"

GALLERY IX  
PAINTINGS

22.	LANDSCAPE	1930.	24" x 20"
	<i>Lent by Philadelphia Museum of Art</i>		
23.	MIDI	1914.	30" x 25"
	<i>Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Forbes Watson</i>		
24.	THE RED EARTH	1920.	25" x 30"
	<i>Lent by Mrs. John O. Blanchard</i>		
25.	THE PALE HORSE	1928.	25" x 30"
26.	WASHINGTON CROSSING THE DELAWARE	1931.	20" x 36"
	<i>Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art</i>		
27.	FIELD CORN	1927.	34" x 25"
	<i>Lent by Miss Elisabeth S. Crafts</i>		
28.	DON QUIXOTE AND SANCHO PANZA	1935.	20" x 24"
	<i>Lent by Mr. Stephen C. Clark</i>		
29.	SEATED FIGURE	1928.	50" x 32"
30.	JOSIE COLLINS	1913.	20" x 24"
31.	THE HIGH BALCONY	1914.	30" x 25"
32.	THE PINE	1915.	25" x 30"
	<i>Lent by Mr. and Mrs. John S. Sheppard</i>		
33.	THE BURIAL	1930.	24" x 20"
34.	THE DAY SHIFT	1929.	40" x 50"
35.	THE VENETIAN SHAWL	1908.	24" x 20"
36.	RED BARNS	1923.	25" x 30"
	<i>Lent by Phillips Memorial Gallery</i>		

37. SCAFFOLDING 1919. 30" x 25"  
38. HEAD OF MISS RAPHAELLA OTTIANO 1925. 24" x 20"

GALLERY X

## WATERCOLORS

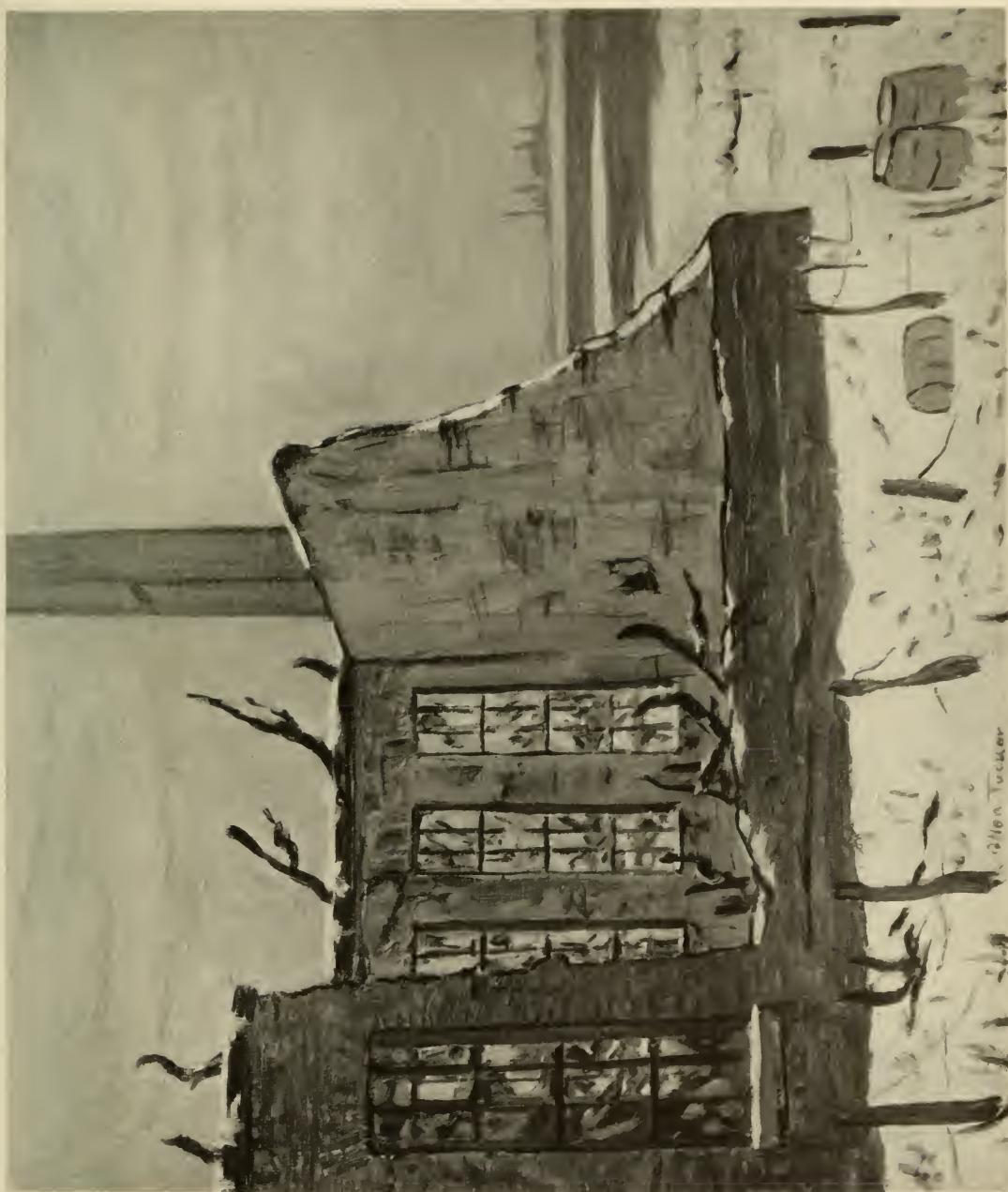
39. HOUSE AT BEDFORD 1931.  
 40. EASTERLY GALE 1935.  
 41. HILLS AT CASTINE 1936.  
*Lent by Miss Katharine Rhoades*  
 42. STORMY AFTERNOON 1930.  
 43. RED WHARF HOUSE 1936.  
 44. SPRING TREES 1928.  
*Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art*  
 45. SPRING IN MAINE 1937.  
 46. THATCHER'S ISLAND 1928.  
 47. APPLE TREE 1928.  
 48. ACROSS THE PENOBSCOT 1936.  
 49. AUTUMN 1929.  
 50. RAIN 1928.  
*Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art*  
 51. RAIN, CASTINE 1935.  
 52. HARBOR, CASTINE 1935.  
 53. FIELD IN AUTUMN 1937.  
 54. TOWARD CAMDEN 1935.  
 55. THE "SUN DOG" 1937.  
 56. TREES 1930.  
 57. WESTCHESTER HILLS 1928.  
 58. DEAD WHARF 1937.

MISS RAPHAELLA OTTIANO, 1919



Brian Turner  
1971

THE DEAD FACTORY, 1931



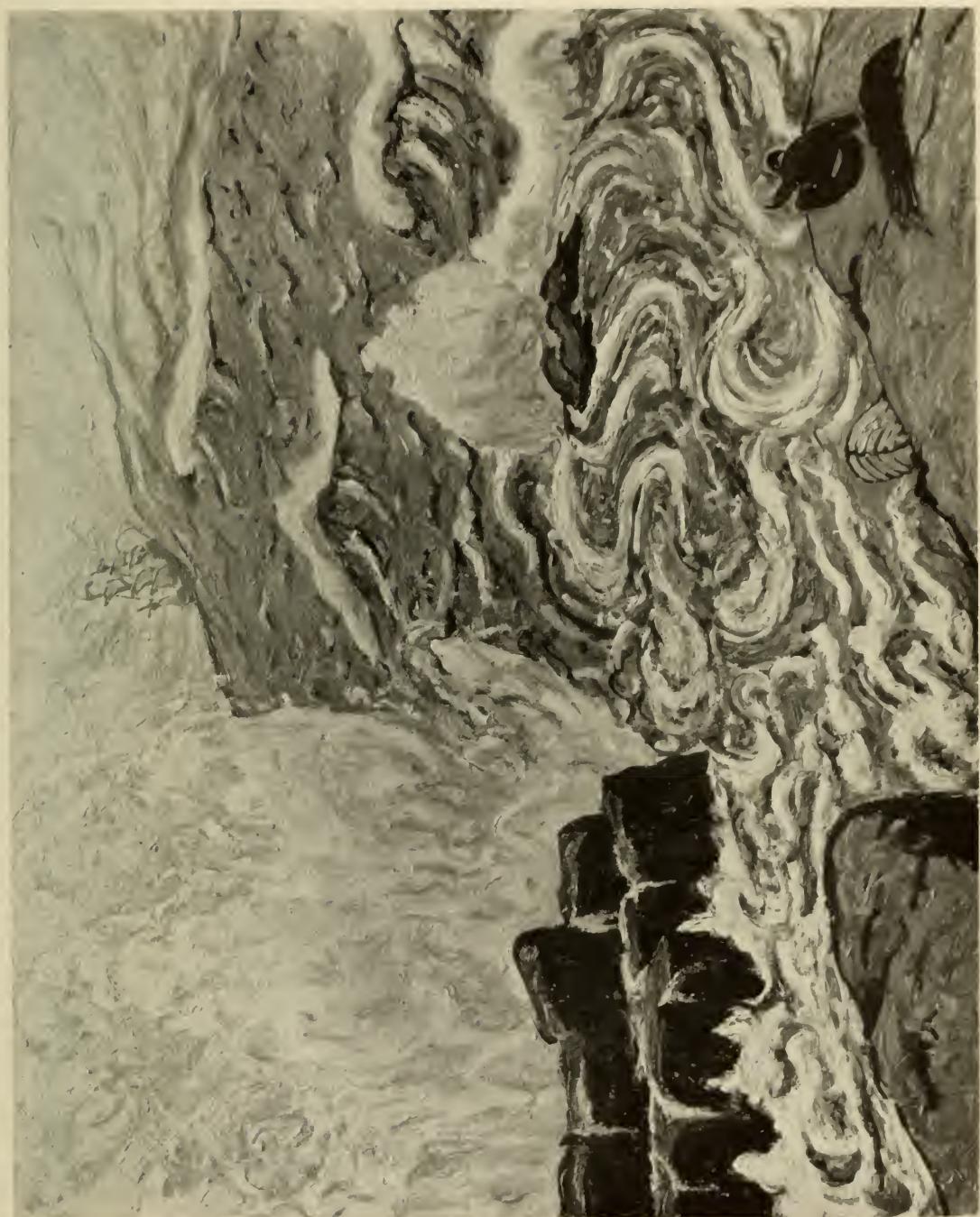
Colton Tucker

THE BURIAL, 1930

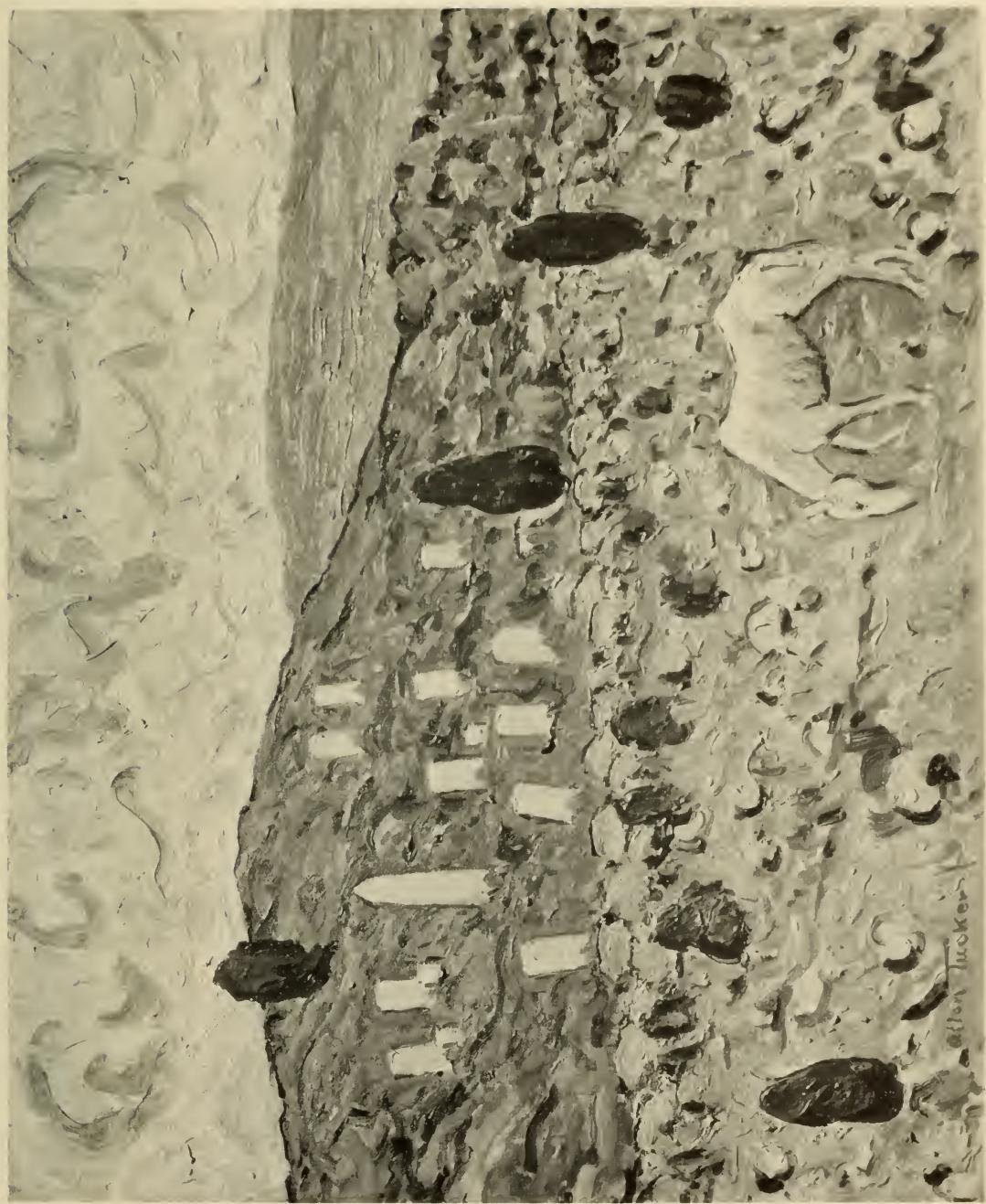


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THE FLYING DUTCHMAN, 1931



THE PALE HORSE, 1928

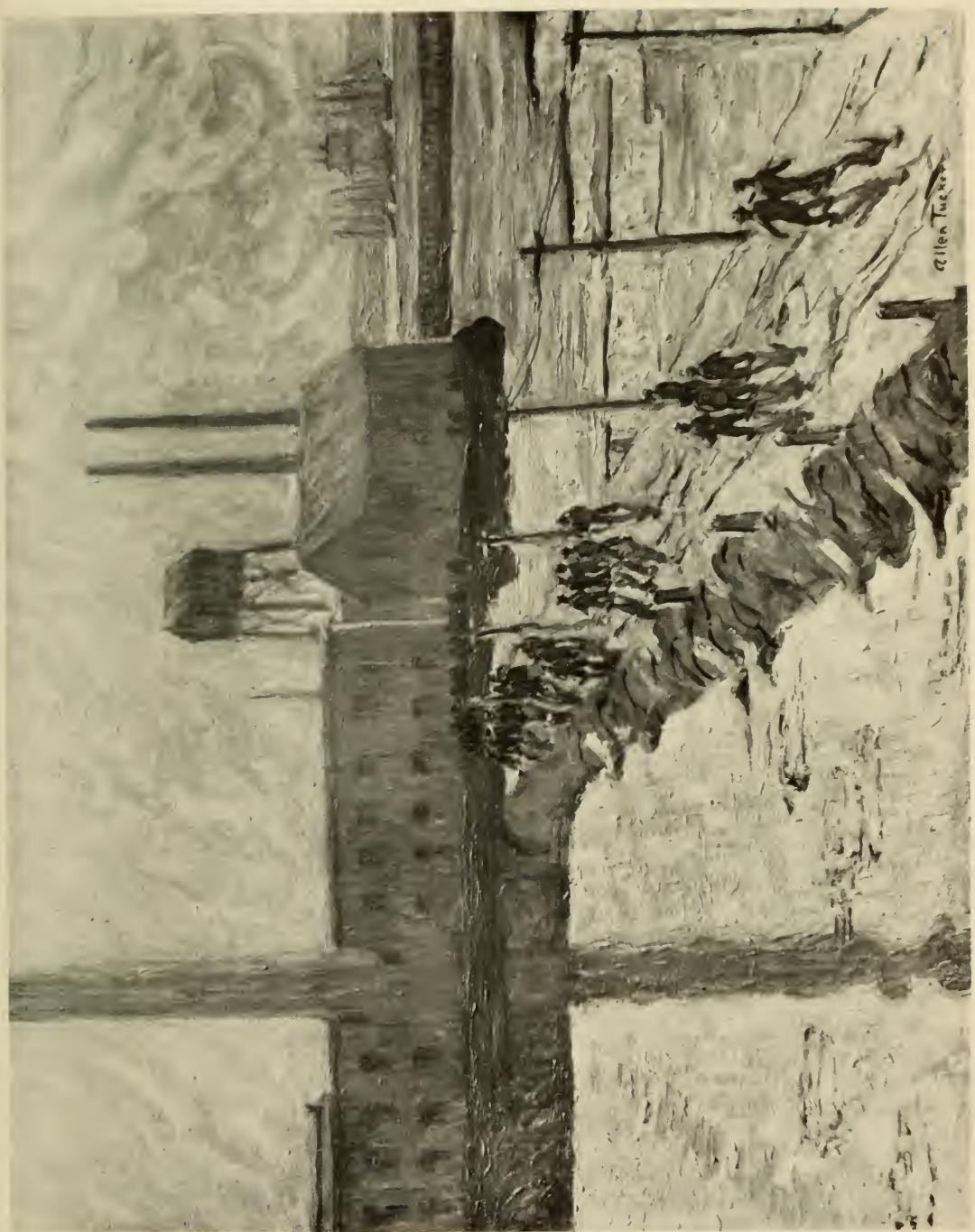


THE ORANGE DRESS, 1929  
*Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art*



ERIN THAYER

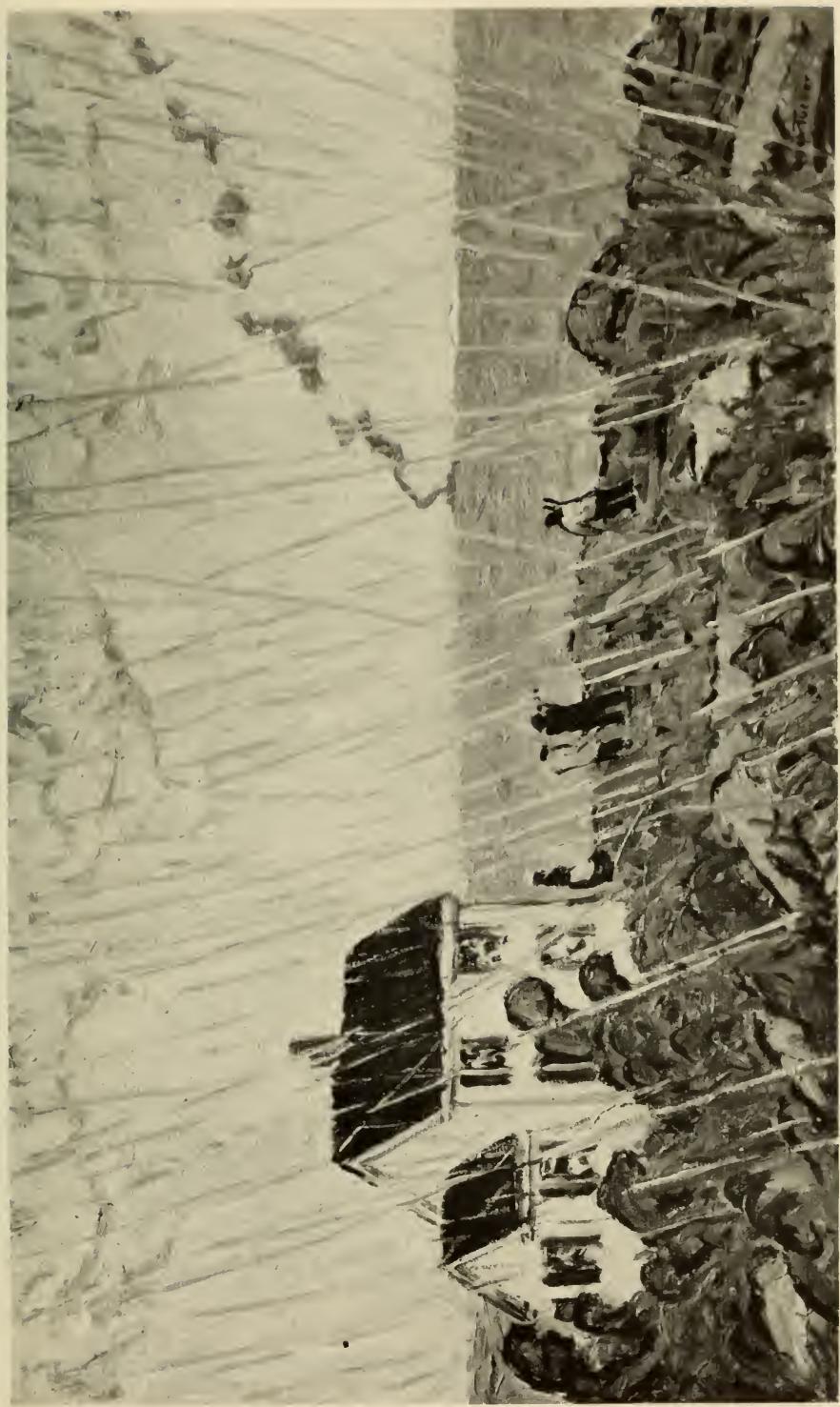
THE DAY SHIFT, 1929



allen T. G.

THE SQUALL, 1930

*Collection of the Phillips Memorial Gallery*



THE REVIEW, 1931



# ALLEN TUCKER

By FORBES WATSON

*A Volume of*

*THE AMERICAN ARTISTS SERIES*

*of the*

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

A critical monograph containing an essay, biography, bibliographical note, and twenty-one full page illustrations, including a portrait frontispiece. The Macmillan Company, 60 Fifth Avenue, New York City, Price \$1.00.

## DESIGN AND THE IDEA

By ALLEN TUCKER

Essays based on four lectures given to the  
Art Students League

*Published by the Arts Publishing Company 1930*  
*The American Federation of Arts, 1939. Price \$1.00*

THE ABOVE VOLUMES MAY BE PURCHASED AT THE INFORMATION DESK OF THE MUSEUM AS WELL AS FROM THE PUBLISHERS

NOTE: A further exhibition of Mr. Tucker's work containing a few pictures from this exhibition as well as others will be held at the Century Association, 7 West 43rd Street, from January 8th to February 4th, inclusive. Tickets may be secured from members or by application at the office.

**THE WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART  
IS OPEN FREE TO THE PUBLIC DAILY,  
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